1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

Some were left free to look after land, and even those who were posted on guard duties were posted near their fields.

Jamma tenure conferred a double prestige on the holder in addition to the undoubted economic advantage. It signified that the holder had his roots in Coorg, and the duty of rendering military service to the state in times of emergency conferred on him the second type of prestige. The other important tenure in Coorg was *sāgu*, in which not only was land assessed at ten rupees per hundred *bhaṭṭis* of land, being twice the rate for *jamma* land, but also the holder was liable to render every type of service to the state except military service. During Richter's time, but for forty Coorgs, all the people holding land on *sāgu* tenure were non-Coorgs.[1]

The Rājas occasionally granted land on *jamma* tenure to non-Coorgs as a special mark of favour. Occasionally, Coorgs who held land on *jamma* tenure were transferred to the *sāgu* class as punishment for wrongs done by them.

VI

During the two centuries of rule by the Rājas, Coorg underwent a number of changes, political, administrative, and social. The authority of the local chieftains or Nāyakas was destroyed and the administration was centralized. The Rājas established a postal service (*unché*) for the use of officials only. Land was surveyed thoroughly, and the type of tenure under which each farm was held was recorded in the *Hukum Nāma* of Linga Rāja II (1811–20). The *Hukum Nāma* also contained a few paragraphs dealing with the powers of officials to try cases, civil and criminal, without reference to the Rāja. Serious offences like adultery, murder, and treason were tried by the Rāja himself. The recognition of the authority of the headman of a village and his council of elders was a general feature of the administrative system of the Rājas. They also recognized the authority of caste elders to try and settle caste disputes.

The long and bitter struggle with Haider and Tippu increased the sense of national identity of the inhabitants of Coorg. Coorgs played an important part in this struggle as they formed the bulk of the Rājas' soldiery, and also because they were specially selected for barbarous treatment by Tippu Sultan.

[1] Op. cit., p. 406.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

at least in the first few years of marriage, is a much more important relative for a girl than even her husband. And this relationship is basically one of conflict. A girl is also in a relation of conflict with her husband's sisters, married as well as unmarried, and with her husband's brother's wives.

The conflicts between the women in the patrilocal *okka* strike at its solidarity. Elsewhere in south India where partition is easy, they lead to division of the joint family. But in Coorg where the *okka* is a very strong entity, and where partition is legally forbidden, they make the harmonious working of the *okka* extremely difficult.

Besides the conflicts mentioned above, certain lines of cleavage in the *okka* are obvious. The distinction between the sexes, which is present in the whole of the society, is also present in every unit of it. So is the distinction between members of different generations. Enormous emphasis is laid on seniority, and this is visible not only between members of different generations, but also between members of the same generation. The younger member has to behave deferentially towards the older.

Before the introduction, in however grudging a form, of the principle of partition, and of the new ideals associated with industrialization and Westernization, the elementary family was not a powerful unit. It obtained only a grudging recognition in ritual, which was quite consistent with its relative lack of emphasis in the total structure. A tendency of recent times is the strengthening of the elementary family at the expense of the *okka*. The elementary family is increasingly becoming the real residential, commensal, and economic group with certain ties with the *okka* from which it is emerging, or has just emerged.

The existence of these divisions inside the *okka* did not prevent it from acting as a unit in relation to other *okkas*. The *okka* was the basic unit of society, and certain offices like the headmanship of the village, *nāḍ*, and the local temple traditionally ran in certain *okkas*. Again, contribution to collective tasks was on the basis of the *okka*. For instance, each local high caste *okka* had to send at least one man and one woman for every Coorg wedding in the village. Similarly, it had to send representatives to the festival of the village-deity, and for repairing roads and building bridges. All the adult men in an *okka* were required to attend a collective dance or hunt.

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During the festival of Kētrappa at Benglor the Poleyas may not be
seen by any high caste villager till the eighteenth day of the festival, 621
but on the eighteenth evening they march in procession with 796
pipe and drum to the Kētrappa temple and watch the ritual from 776
a nearby knoll. They bring offerings of fowls to Kētrappa, and the
birds are decapitated by Mēdas, who have an important part in
the festival. The Kētrappa festival seems to be an extreme instance
of the exclusion of Poleyas. In the festivals of other village-deities
they participate to a greater extent, though on a different level
from the rest.

Every village has an hereditary headman called *takka*. It is the 622
headman's duty to see that the village greens (*mandus*) where [364]
dances and dinners are held, and the village assembly meets, are [363]
kept in good condition. He has to ensure that the bridges and
ferries in the village are in constant repair and that the village [485]
tank is clean. He has to look after pilgrims and travellers passing
through the village.

Coorgs have a keen appreciation of leadership and precedence. 622
From their folklore it appears as though they are incapable of 829
conceiving of any group, of no matter what, without a leader. The
epithet consistently applied to a headman is '*mūpayanda*' which
means 'precedence-having'. A sense of precedence and respect for
seniority helped to introduce order into their meetings, just as a
respect for precedents produced a consistent body of decisions on
any particular matter.

Formerly a headman wielded great influence in his village (or 622
nāḍ), and a good headman was a powerful factor for stability. If the 623
headman was a bad man, the entire village was ruined: as a pro- [539]
verb has it, 'when the *takka* is a loafer the entire village is like the
area inhabited by Untouchables'. In the management of village
affairs and the settlement of village disputes the headman was
assisted by an assembly consisting of the representatives of the
various *okkas* in the village. The assembly was called *kūṭa*, which
means a 'gathering' or 'group'. It met on one of the several greens [367]
in the village. There were separate village greens for transacting
business (*panchāyati mandu*), for dancing at the harvest festival
(*ūr mandu*), a third for dancing at the festival of the village-deity
(*dēvara mandu*), and so on. Sometimes there was a roofed enclosure [344]
(*ambala*) on the green, which provided shelter from rain and sun for
the assembly to meet, and for women to watch the dances.

The village-assemblies were far more powerful in the past than 623
681

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

V

THE CULT OF THE *OKKA*

I

THE *okka* or the patrilineal and patrilocal joint family is the basic group among Coorgs. It is impossible to imagine a Coorg apart from the *okka* of which he is a member. It affects his life at every point and colours all his relations with the outside world. People who do not belong to an *okka* have no social existence at all, and the elders always bring pressure on the parties concerned to see that children born out of wedlock obtain membership in their father's or mother's *okka*.

Membership of an *okka* is acquired by birth, and the outside world always identifies a man with his *okka*. His association with his *okka* does not cease even after death, because he then becomes one of a body of apotheosized ancestors (*kāraṇava*) who are believed to look after the *okka* of which they were members when alive. The ancestors are worshipped, and offerings of food and drink (*bhāraṇi*) are occasionally made to them.

Formerly the boys in an *okka*, all sons of agnatically related males, grazed the *okka's* cattle together, hunted birds, and played games. When they grew up all of them jointly looked after the ancestral estate under the guidance of the head of the *okka*.

Membership of an *okka* determines to a very large extent the choice of a spouse. First of all, marital relations are forbidden between members of the same *okka*. Where agnation overflows the *okka*, the taboo extends to agnatic relatives who are not members of the *okka*. Again, children of sisters may not intermarry.

The ancestral, immovable property of an *okka* was formerly regarded as impartible. It usually descended from one generation of agnatically related males to another without being split up in the process. Partition did, however, occur when every adult member of the *okka* wanted it. But such cases were unusual—at least that is what one is told. Both the difficulty of partition and the preference for leviratic unions added to the strength of the *okka*.

Offices like the headmanship of a village or *nāḍ* or temple were

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

596 622 hereditary in certain *okkas*. The eldest member of the senior agnatic branch succeeded to the office in question.

596 621 Every high-caste *okka* has to send at least one man and one woman to a wedding, festival, or a common village task like repairing a road, or weeding a temple compound; and all the adult males in an *okka* are required to attend a village dance or hunt. A defaulting *okka* is fined.

596 829 The members of an *okka* have to live together from birth till death. They are bound together by numerous strong ties, and they co-operate in performing common tasks. After death, they become ancestors who continue to show an interest in their *okka* and demand propitiation from their descendants. The *okka* is something very much more than the group of living members in it at any given moment. It is a continuum through time, and the body of living members at any particular moment form only points on it. Coorgs themselves clearly state that the *okka* has a longer life than its members. They are also aware that an individual lives, in a social sense, as long as his *okka*. There is a great desire for the continuance of the *okka*, and there is no greater calamity than its extinction. When an *okka* is threatened with extinction certain traditional devices are resorted to to perpetuate it.

596 [342] The ancestral house and estate are sacred, and even today a Coorg likes to have a wedding or funeral performed in the ancestral house. The unity and solidarity of an *okka* find expression in ritual. Its strength is projected to the 'mystical' plane.

An individual is normally identified with his *okka*, but such identification of the individual with his *okka* is in extra-*okka* contexts, and it does not at all mean that the *okka* in question is undivided from within. Normally the elementary families inside an *okka* are potential groups of fission. The principles of segregation of the sexes and the unity of the members of a generation which run right through Coorg society are also at work inside the *okka*, uniting some members against the others. There are also tensions between individuals, especially among the women members.

596 572 Every Coorg *okka* is bound by the ties of friendship (*aruvāmé*) to another neighbouring Coorg *okka*. This is a traditional relationship between two neighbouring Coorg *okkas*, and it involves certain ritual and social duties. It is frequently mutual, and affinal relations between the two friendly *okkas* are common.

596 Formerly every Coorg *okka* had one or more Poleya or other low-

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

When the fortunes of a *nāḍ* were at a low ebb, the elders of that *nāḍ* went on a pilgrimage to the patron-deity of the *nāḍ* and prayed to him for the birth of a hero in their midst.

Legends grew up about a hero. Chegeṭṭira Appaṇṇa is supposed to have accomplished everything he did before he was sixteen days old. The hero had power to curse. After he died, he became a powerful spirit, a *bira*.

The boundary of a *nāḍ* obtains importance on some ritual occasions. A groom passing in state through a *nāḍ* to the bride's village is given the 'plantain honour' at the boundary of the *nāḍ*.

Richter describes a custom which brings out the ritual importance of the *nāḍ*-boundary:

> In cases of sore afflictions befalling a whole village or *nāḍ* such as small-pox, cholera, cattle-disease, the ryots [peasants] combine to appease the wrath of Māriamma [the goddess Māri who presides over these epidemics] by collecting contributions of pigs, rice, coconuts, bread and plantains, from the different houses and depositing them at the *mandu* [green]; whence they are carried in a procession with tom-toms. In one basket there is some rice, and the members of each house on coming out bring a little rice in the hand, waving it round the head, throw it into the basket, with the belief that the dreaded evil will depart with the rice. At last the offerings are put down on the *nāḍ*-boundary, the animals are killed, their blood is offered on a stone, the rice and basket are left, and the rest of the provisions consumed by those composing the procession. The people of adjoining villages and *nāḍs* repeat the ceremony, and thus the epidemic is supposed to be banished from the country. In still greater calamities, a flock of sheep is driven from *nāḍ* to *nāḍ* and, at last, expelled from the country.[1]

X

There is no social unit among Coorgs which is without a head. Every *okka* has a headman and the headman's wife is the head of the women in the *okka*. A temple has a headman with a number of officials under him. A village has a village-headman, and above the village is the *nāḍ*, and every *nāḍ* has at least one *nāḍ*-headman, and frequently more than one. The highest category of headmen are, however, the headmen of *stmé* or *désha*, of whom there are eight in all.

Coorgs have a keen sense of discipline, which is associated in

[1] *Manual of Coorg*, p. 170.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

their minds with leadership and precedence. In their folksongs, not only a group of men, but also a herd of cattle and a bunch of flowers have their leaders. And there the usual epithet by which a headman is referred to is *mūpayanda*, which means 'having precedence'. The sense of precedence is ubiquitous: formerly, when caravans from every *nāḍ* went to Malabar every summer, the senior headman's pack-bullocks marched ahead of the pack-bullocks of the others.

Ideas about precedence are expressed on ritual occasions. For instance, most festivals of Coorgs include the sport of shooting at a target (*kuri*): a coconut and, on either side of it, a plantain spathe are tied to the high branch of a tree, and the competitors have to shoot at the coconut from a distance. The headman of the village has the right to shoot first at the target. Again, at the village dance held during the harvest festival, the village-headman, or an expert dancer selected by him, leads the dance. The temple-headman comes next after the village-headman.

At the *nāḍ* dance, which is held a day or two after the village dance, precedence is very important. The dancers of each village forming part of the *nāḍ* gather together at their headman's house, whence they proceed to the *nāḍ* green with band. When the senior *nāḍ*-headman arrives with his men everyone present has to stand up. A mat is spread for him, and others may sit down only after him. If *nāḍ*-headmen from other *nāḍs* come to the dance, they sit to the left of the host *nāḍ*-headman, observing a strict order of seniority between them. Every dancer is provided with a pair of sticks. The host *nāḍ*-headman leads the dance, with the guest *nāḍ*-headmen occupying positions immediately next to him. The temple-headman comes after the guest *nāḍ*-headmen, and the various village-headmen who are gathered there take up positions after the temple-headman.

The guests are received with band when they arrive, and after the dancing and sports are over, they are given refreshments which nowadays consist of coffee, soft drinks, fruits, and betel leaves and areca-nut. Each guest *nāḍ*-headman pays a *paṇa* to the hosts before leaving. The hosts accompany each guest a little distance, the host's band proceeding ahead of the party. When all the guests have left, the villagers conduct their own *nāḍ*-headman in state to his house. They dine in his house, after which they disperse.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

796 During the harvest festival a party of villagers go from house to
533 house, and at each house they visit they sing the 'house song',
● 622 which gives an account of the ancestors of that house. After the
[574] song is sung, the singers are treated to refreshments and given gifts of money.

The singers are required to visit the village-headman's house first. Similarly, the people who put on fancy dress during the harvest festival have to visit the village-headman's house first.

For a week before the beginning of the harvest festival all the adult males in the village gather together at the village-headman's house every evening before proceeding to the green to practise the dances and play some games. The guests are treated to a light
[574] repast, after which the headman asks someone to take up a *duḍi* (small drum) and sing. The person who is asked to sing may not
[681] refuse, and refusal is punishable by fine. Even the temple-headman is not exempt from this rule.

At the Kundat Bhadrakāḷi festival, the villagers frequently move about in processions during the last few days of the festival. At the head of these processions walks the *nāḍ*-headman's wife carrying
[778] a dish-lamp. A dish-lamp has ritual value, and it is essential on every ritual occasion, and it is the privilege of the *nāḍ*-headman's wife to carry it at the festival of Kundat Bhadrakāli.

178 The political and economic forces set in motion in the last 120
622 years have been responsible for certain structural inconsistencies
596 coming to the surface during festivals. It was not always the headman's *okka* which benefited from the new economic and educational opportunities. The *okkas* which benefited from the latter could ignore with impunity the headman's position and authority. Frequently the headman accepted the changed situation, and this not only failed to solve the conflict for supremacy between him and the newly rich *okkas* but instead accentuated it. The latter, having secured wealth and official positions, tried to secure headmanship too. Disputes became frequent.

[656] The breakdown of the traditional economy meant that frequently the headman could not fulfil the duties of hospitality periodically required of him; and when the headman was unable to perform his duties, he found it difficult to insist on others
178 performing their duties towards him. People began to gravitate to
622 the new centres of power, the officials and rich men.
627 Formerly, people used to take their disputes to their headman

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

on the occasion of the festival of the local village-deity. Such a festival ensured the presence of a large number of elders, a fact which added to the weight and authority of any decision given by the headman. Even more important was the fact that people were generally afraid to perjure themselves before a deity, and this was specially so in the case of some deities like Appangiriyappa of Kāṭakēri, well known for the severe punishment which he inflicted on perjurors.

The success with which a headman was able to settle disputes also depended on his wealth, the spread of his kinship ties, and his reputation for impartiality. The impoverishment of some headmen in recent years and the breakdown of the traditional way of life have been responsible for undermining the authority of the headmen.

XI

Formerly, two or three neighbouring *nāḍs* came together occasionally to discuss matters of common concern. A folksong contains an appeal (*éyi koḍ*) to an assembly of the elders of two *nāḍs* from an assembly of the elders of a single *nāḍ*. Another folksong refers to the elders of three *nāḍs* meeting together.

The performance of certain calendar festivals such as the harvest festival requires the co-operation of several *nāḍs*. The ritual cutting of paddy sheaves constitutes the most important rite of the festival, and this has to be performed during a particular period on a particular day. Both the date and time of performance of the rite are decided only a fortnight before the festival by the astrologer of the Pāḍi Subramaṇya temple in Pāḍi village, who informs the assembled headmen of Pāḍinālknāḍ of his decision. This is later conveyed to every *nāḍ*, village, and *okka*.

Coorgs everywhere in Coorg, with the exception of Kaḍiyetnāḍ people who performed the rite on a different day, accepted the decision of the astrologer of the Subramaṇya temple in Pāḍi. The acceptance produced uniformity in very many *nāḍs*. Such ritual uniformity provides common values and makes possible the integration of several *nāḍs* into a single community.

But it is chiefly Sanskritic Hinduism which provides Coorgs and other Hindus in Coorg with common values which transcend the barriers between *nāḍ* and *nāḍ*, and between caste and caste.

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Coorgs in National Costume

622
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291

A Village Takka (headman)

[facing p. 50]

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

Police.

671 177 625 [635] 41. The police of the taluqs is to be considered under the charge of the Subadárs, and subordinately to them, of the Párapatiagárs and Patéls.

42. The district functionaries are to give at all times their utmost care and attention to prevent disturbances, assaults, and all other acts in breach of the peace; they are to apprehend and send to the Daryáft-Kacheri any person who may be accused of having committed robbery or violence.

671 177 625 622 43. The Patéls of the village and the villagers shall conjointly protect their villages from depredations of robbers. They shall always be on their guard and act with vigilance, so that no thefts or personal assaults may be committed.

45. If any person of a suspicious character makes his appearance in a village, the Patél shall make an enquiry about his name, place of residence and the purpose for which he has come to the village; and if the Patél be not satisfied with his answer, he shall send him to the Párapatiagár.

46. If any person in the village behaves improperly, the Patél shall persuade him to correct his conduct and give him the admonitions that may seem necessary.

[615] [628] 47. If any theft or robbery be committed, the Patél and the villagers shall exert themselves to apprehend the robbers. If the robbers be found in the act of robbing and if they escape, they shall be pursued and seized. The Patéls of the neighbouring villages shall co-operate in ensuring the seizure of the robbers. But if the Patéls or others do not use their endeavours either to discover or apprehend the robbers, and if the Sirkar shall have reason to believe that the robbery was committed through the negligence of the Patéls, they will incur the displeasure of the Sirkar and be punished accordingly.

000 48. Whenever information is lodged of a person having

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

651 423 at the rate of Rs. 2—8 per 100 butties, the whole extent of Umbali-tenure would be about 443,900 butties.

651 423 622 An addition, at least in name, to these Umbali-holdings has been lately made at the recommendation of Capt. Cole, who proposed "that a fixed remuneration in the shape of a reduction in the assessment on the land, held by each Patél, be allowed to him as a "*Gaud-Umbali*" for the large additional work thrown on the Patéls by the effects of advancing civilization, by the opening out of the country and by the settlement of Europeans." This measure was hailed with satisfaction by the Patéls; most of them fixed the Umbali on the hereditary lands of their houses and in some cases the Umbali amounted to the entire assessment on their lands, which by this remission became virtually Jhágir or free, so that the "Gaud-Umbali" should be classed with the Inám-lands or freeholds.

651 423 The *Jódi-tenure* (from the Can. jódi, a favourable quit-rent) is the holding of land which has been alienated to the office of the Patéls in the Yélusávirashíme- and Nanjarájpatna-taluq and for the maintenance of religious establishments, in all parts of Coorg. Half of its original assessment having been relinquished in favour of the holders, the Sirkar receives only Rs. 5 per 100 butties as from Jamma-land. Like this the former cannot be sublet and, if left uncultivated, it is at the disposal of the district officers and may be given by them to any ryot on Ságu-tenure, when 5 Rs. of the land-tax are paid to Government and the other 5 Rs. to the religious establishment to which it belongs. The revenue of the Jódi-tenure in 1869-70 was Rs. 5,930—5—7.

All these different holdings were liable to three additional taxes payable to Government viz: ghee-house- and Dhálipaddy-tax.

The *ghee-tax* amounted to half a seer of ghee for every 100 butties of land and was paid in consideration of the Sirkar's expense on feasting the Coorgs, who assembled at